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Don't travel to Israel, Iran: India tells citizens

India on Friday asked its citizens not to travel to Iran and Israel amid increasing fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israeli soil in retaliation to a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago. People familiar with the latest developments said no more Indians will be allowed to go to Israel to work in the construction sector. Over 6,000 construction workers from India were to leave for Israel in April and May | P11

NIA nabs B'luru bomber, mastermind in Bengal

Alleged bomber Mussavir Hussain Shazeb and mastermind Adbul Matheen Taha were staying in a lodge under false identities

BALA CHAUHAN & MUKESH RANJAN @ Bengaluru/ New Delhi

THE National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested two accused in the Bengaluru Rameshwaram Cafe blast — the alleged mastermind Adbul Matheen Taha and bomber Mussavir Hussain Shazeb — from West Bengal in the wee hours of Friday.

The two were staying in a low-budget lodge in Kanthi — a small town about 180 km from Kolkata in the state's Purba Medinipur district. As per NIA, they were staying in the lodge under false names. The agency, in an official release, acknowledged the cooperation of central intelligence agencies and state police agencies of West Bengal, Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala in the professionally coordinated joint operation to nab the two terror accused.

The NIA special court in Kolkata, where the accused were produced, granted three days transit remand to the agency to take them to Bengaluru.

Taha's arrest is a breakthrough for the NIA as his name figured prominently as an accused in several terror-related cases in Karnataka since 2019.

Accused being taken to NIA court in Kolkata on Friday| PTI

The NIA announced a bounty of ₹10 lakh on credible information leading to the arrest of Taha and Shazeb. The two belong to Thirthahalli in Shivamogga district.

"It was Taha who also worked on the escape plans of the duo and managed to evade arrest all these weeks," a senior NIA official informed.

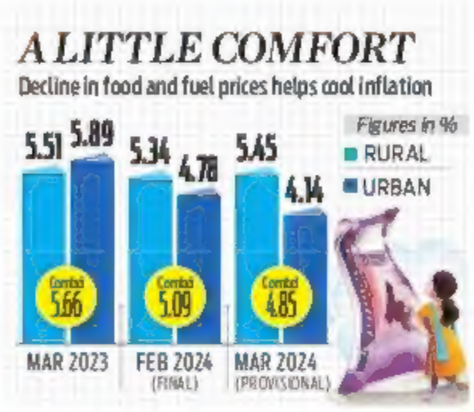
In May 2020, the NIA had announced a reward of ₹3 lakh for information leading to Taha's arrest in the Al-Hind Bengaluru module case. The module is said to be behind the murder of a Hindu leader in Tamil Nadu.

The Rameshwaram Cafe blast on March 1 in the IT hub of Bengaluru injured nine persons. Shazeb allegedly kept the bag containing the IED near the hand wash area of popular cafe. He was spotted de-boarding a bus before entering the cafe with the bag.

On March 28, the NIA arrested Muzammil Shareef, an alleged key conspirator, from Bengaluru after massive raids across 18 locations in three states; 12 in Karnataka, 5 in Tamil Nadu and one in UP.

BIG CATCH

- Mastermind Taha belongs to a self-proclaimed terror outfit 'Al Hind IS', which was formed in B'luru in 2019
- He is said to be the common thread in almost all terrorist activities in Karnataka ever since 2019



Retail inflation moderates to 4.85% in March

MONIKA YADAV @New Delhi

INDIA's annual retail inflation declined to 4.85% in March, down from 5.09% in February, according to government data released on Friday. The consumer price based inflation has remained within the RBI's target range.

The data showed that food and beverage inflation fell a wee bit to 7.68% in March from 7.8% recorded in February. Fuel inflation stood at -3.24%, a decrease from -0.77%.

Cooking oil prices witnessed an 11.72% decline in March, while the price rise in spices slowed to 11.4% from 13.28% in February. The inflation in pulses decreased to 17.71% from 20.47% in January.

However, vegetable prices shot up 28.34% in March, disturbing the kitchen budget of households. Cereal prices also rose 8.37% during the month.

According to ICRA, the food & beverages inflation will remain above the 7% mark in April. It warns that the impending heatwave may push prices of perishables, heightening the criticality of a favourable monsoon in 2024 to keep food inflation in check.

BOYCOTT OF COURTS

HC to amend rules to act against errant advocates

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE High Court of Karnataka has published a draft of the proposed amendment to the "Rules laying down conditions subject to which an advocate shall be permitted to practice in the high court and the courts subordinate thereto (Amendment) Rules, 2024" framed by it.

The purpose of the amendment is to insert Rule 13, which deals with strike/boycott of courts by advocates. The rule proposes to consider strike by advocates as an interference with the administration of justice. Advocates participating in strikes by boycotting courts may be suspended from practising in lower or higher courts.

The proposed rules will come into force from the date of their publication in the gazette.

According to the draft published recently, if advocates or the association of advocates have grievances or complaints, they should submit a written representation to the chief justice or the grievance redressal committee (GRC) constituted by the chief justice.

If the errant advocates do not abide by any advice for amicable settlement, the GRC is at liberty to submit a report to the CJ to initiate proceedings against them.

ONLY CONG FULFILLS ITS PROMISES: KHARGE

Congress in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge and DCM DK Shivakumar at a poll rally in Kalaburagi on Friday | EXPRESS

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @Kalaburagi

CONGRESS president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Friday that his party has implemented its guarantees promised during the last Assembly elections in Karnataka, but the BJP government at the Centre has not fulfilled its promises even after 10 years.

Participating in a campaign meeting of Congress candidate Radhakrishna Doddamani, Kharge sought to know if the Modi government has fulfilled any of its promises. He said Congress has implemented its five guarantees and the people of Karnataka are enjoying their benefits now. "Are you enjoying the benefits of any guarantees of the Modi government?," he asked the audience.

Kharge said, "During the previous Lok Sabha elections, Modi promised people that if his party comes to power, it will create two crore jobs every year. Has he fulfilled this promise? Modi promised to bring back black money stashed abroad and give every Indian Rs 15 lakh. Has anybody received Rs 15 lakh? Modi also promised to double the income of farmers. Has any farmer's income doubled so far?"

He claimed that only Congress fulfils the promises it makes. If I.N.D.I.A. comes to power, it will provide Rs 1 lakh each to a woman head of a poor family, it will give Rs 1 lakh each to youth who have completed one-year apprenticeship in any company for self-employment, it will legalise MSP for farm produce, and waive crop loans of farmers.

Kharge alleged that the rail coach production unit, which he started in Yadgir district when he was Union minister, was stopped by the NDA government. His request to upgrade the ESIC Medical Complex in Kalaburagi to All-India Institute of Medical Sciences was turned down. CONTINUED ON: P8

India relocates diplomatic staff from Sittwe to Yangon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

IN view of the precarious security situation in the Myanmarese city of Sittwe, India has relocated its staff from its consulate there to Yangon. According to reports, several parts of Myanmar have been witnessing intense fighting between the military junta and resistance forces, which have already captured several towns, including military bases.

"We have temporarily relocated our staff at CGI (Consulate General of India) Sittwe to Yangon. Our Consulate in Mandalay remains fully functional," Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, said on Friday. He added that India is closely monitoring the ongoing conflict between the military junta in Myanmar and the ethnic armed organisations.

Jaiswal said the security situation in Myanmar remains "precarious" and is deteriorating. "Necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety of our citizens," he said at his weekly media briefing.

EXPRESS READ

Noted astrologer SK Jain passes away at 66 in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Noted astrologer **Dr Surendra Kumar Jain** passed away in Bengaluru on Friday due to pulmonary complications. He was 66. Jain had become a household name with his show telecast on a Kannada channel for over 20 years. Recently, the government conferred the Rajyotsava Award on him | P5

Vote from home starts today in K'taka, to continue for 5 days

Bengaluru: Voting in Karnataka, which comes under Phase-2 of the elections across India, starts from April 13 with Vote From Home (VFH) and will continue for the next five days. A total of 40,743 people have opted for VFH. Of them, 37,739 people are aged above 85 years of age and 13,004 are People with Disabilities (PwD) | P6

Independent candidate for Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency KS Eshwarappa arrives to file his nomination with PM Modi lookalike Sadananda Nayak of Udupi, on Friday | EXPRESS

'Modi' shines in KSE roadshow in S'mogga

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Shivamogga

WHEN the issue of using PM Modi's picture during poll campaign by independent candidate KS Eshwarappa is before a local court, the former deputy chief minister sprung a surprise on thousands of his supporters by bringing a man resembling Modi to file his nomination papers for Lok Sabha elections, in the city on Friday.

Sadananda Nayak, the Modi lookalike, hails from Bommarabettu village of Hiriyadka town in Udupi district. He is a cook and started working after dropping out of school. Nayak took part in a massive procession taken out by Rashtrabhaktara Balaga, which is supporting Eshwarappa for Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat.

A large number of supporters from different parts of the district and also from Byndoor Assembly constituency participated in the procession.

Nayak stole the show as he marched with Eshwarappa in the city. Waving at the crowd, Nayak sought support for Eshwarappa with folded hands. Raising slogans in support of Eshwarappa, his supporters carried flags bearing the picture of Modi during the procession.

"After winning the Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat, I will go to New Delhi and take the blessings of PM Modi and support him," Eshwarappa said after filing his nomination papers.

KSE FILES PAPERS AS INDEPENDENT

Shivamogga: Senior BJP leader K S Eshwarappa filed his nomination papers as an independent candidate from the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency on Friday | P8

Visually challenged files papers

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Bidar

PERHAPS for the first time in the history of Lok Sabha elections from Bidar constituency, a visually challenged candidate filed his nomination papers for the seat here on Friday.

Deelip Nagappa Boosa from Kadawad village in Bidar taluk took oath as a candidate using the braille script. He filed his papers before Bidar deputy commissioner Govind Reddy, who is also the returning officer.

Deelip, who studied up to Class 12, told *TNIE* that he got attracted to politics at a young age and wanted to contest elections.

A musician by profession, Deelip said he opened a school for visually challenged people in Bidar a decade ago. However, with no support or grants from the government or NGOs, he had to shut the school.

Deelip said he would visit villages in the constituency with his supporters and seek votes. He will also use social media to reach voters. He stressed the need to reserve some seats in the elected bodies, including Lok Sabha, for physically challenged people.

Visually challenged candidate Deelip Boosa files his nomination papers for Bidar LS seat on Friday | EXPRESS

Despite anti-incumbency, Owaisi is frontrunner

AJAY TOMAR @ Hyderabad

SITTING at a juice shop opposite Mecca Masjid near Charminar on Eid-ul-Fitr, Noor Mohammed, a businessman and resident of Moghulpura, lamented the lack of basic amenities and civic infrastructure in Hyderabad's Old City, the bastion of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM).

"For two decades, [Asaduddin] Owaisi has been the MP from here. But the dingy lanes, traffic snarls, potholed passages and inundation of streets are testimony to the bad conditions in most areas under the constituency," Noor remarked, drawing a comparison with Cyberabad and Secunderabad. Nevertheless, the 52-year-old businessman said the AIMIM boss wins because he voices the concerns of the Muslim community on a nationwide platform.

The Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency, which has a Muslim majority, has been an AIMIM stronghold for four decades since Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi first won as an independent in 1984. After six consecutive victories, son Asaduddin took over in 2004. In 2019, he defeated his nearest rival — the BJP's Bhagavanth Rao — by over 2.8 lakh votes. Notably, the polling percentage (44.84%) in 2019 was the second lowest in the segment since 1957 when it was 41.1%.

SHOWTIME FOR GLADIATORS

Six of the seven Assembly segments falling under Hyderabad are represented by AIMIM legislators. One, Goshamahal, is with the BJP, with T Raja Singh winning for the third time in 2023. With Feroz Khan, who contested from Hyderabad in 2019 on a Congress ticket recently indicating that *dosti* (friendship) has been forged between the AIMIM and the grand old party — the ruling party in the state is yet to even announce its candidate — Asaduddin's main opponent will be the BJP's new firebrand Madhavi Latha.

Latha was arguably more popular outside the segment, at least till a recent TV interview. "I came to know about her only from *Aap ki Adalat*," said a person at Alijah Kotla, one of the many singing Latha's praises. The 49-year-old chairperson of Virinchi hospitals, who is a trained Bharatanatyam dancer, told this newspaper that the entire neighbourhood — Secunderabad and Cyberabad — has gone much ahead. CONTINUED ON: P11

ILLUSTRATION: MANDAR PARSHAR